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SUBJECT: SHANGHAI EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MIGRANT CHILDREN, BUT STILL A LONG-TERM CHALLENGE

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11. (SBU) Summary: As in many other large Chinese cities, the Shanghai Municipal Government is exploring ways to improve the quality of education for migrant children. The Shanghai Education Commission (SEC) in January 2008 announced plans to increase the proportion of migrant children in Shanghai enrolled in public schools to 70 percent by 2010. Currently, 57 percent of migrant children attend Shanghai public schools. The municipal government will provide subsidies to qualified private schools to accept migrant children. During a visit to the Pu Guang migrant school in Pudong, Congenoffs learned that many migrant school facilities and quality of education lag far behind Shanghai public schools. The school only had 20 teachers for its 700 students and it lacked facilities such as a computer lab. Like many migrant schools, the Pu Guang School is working hard to improve its level of education, meet the SEC's standards for private schools and receive subsidies from the Shanghai government. End Summary.

Compulsory Education for
Migrant Children

12. (U) According to Shanghai government statistics, there are more than 4 million migrant workers in Shanghai. However there were limited education options for migrant children through the 1990s. At that time, public schools usually only accepted children with proof of local residence registration (hukou). As a result, migrant schools emerged to service the migrant community. Although most Shanghai private schools do not have strict hukou requirements, their fees are usually too high for migrant workers. Migrant schools charge considerably less tuition, but conditions and quality of education lag far behind Shanghai public schools. In 2001, the Central Government decreed that local governments with large migrant populations must take the main responsibility for ensuring that migrant children have access to compulsory education and that public schools should serve as the main channel in providing education to migrant children.

Shanghai's Efforts

13. (U) Like many large cities, Shanghai is exploring different ways to promote compulsory education for migrant children. In January 2008, the Shanghai Education Commission (SEC) announced a new policy on compulsory education for migrant children in Shanghai with the goal of enrolling 70 percent of migrant children in public schools by 2010. One of the Shanghai Municipal Government's key programs for 2008 is to increase

enrollment of migrant children in Shanghai's public schools to 60 percent of all migrant children. Congenoffs met with SEC Basic Education Department Vice Director Ling Xiaofeng on March 7 to discuss the SEC's efforts. Her section is responsible for making policies, planning, allocating resources and supervision of policy execution on the "Compulsory Education Law" in Shanghai. Ling said that according to statistics from September 2007, there are nearly 380,000 migrant children in Shanghai, 297,000 of which are elementary school age and the remaining are junior high school age. Among them, 57 percent are enrolled in public schools, approximately 216,900 children. The other 162,900 migrant children are enrolled in 258 migrant children schools scattered mostly in Shanghai's suburban districts. Except for a few migrant schools located in Shanghai's urban Putuo and Yangpu districts, there are no migrant schools in Shanghai's urban areas. Migrant children living in other urban districts attend public schools.

14. (U) Since 2004, the Shanghai Municipal Government has allocated 30 million RMB every year to support migrant children's education in suburban districts. In 2007, the Shanghai government carried out renovations at all 240 migrant schools extant at that time to improve facilities at the schools such as lighting, cafeterias, safety features, toilets, etc. At the same time, the local government has bought insurance for all schools. In order to improve the quality of education at the schools, SEC has initiated a series of measures such as sending experienced teachers (some of whom are retired) to migrant schools, connecting each migrant school with one public school as sister schools and holding training seminars for migrant school principals.

Shanghai Increases Resources for
Migrant Children's Education

15. (U) In addition to enrolling 60 percent of migrant children in public schools in 2008, the Shanghai Municipal Government

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wants to transform 60 migrant schools into private schools. Usually, the education quality of private schools in Shanghai is higher than the general level of public schools and private schools usually charge 5,000-6500 RMB (about USD 700-900) for one semester. Actually SEC wants to administer those qualified migrant schools as private schools now. However, the standard for qualified migrant schools is still lower than general level of local schools. According to Ling, there are fewer public schools in suburban areas where most migrant children live. One of the SEC's goals is to reduce the gap between educational resources in urban and suburban districts. SEC is coordinating with district educational bureaus to allocate and adjust educational resources according to the change of population growth and distribution. In order to make up for the lack of public schools in some districts, SEC is encouraging the development of private schools. The SEC plans to buy services from private schools and will pay private schools to accept migrant children. In the Pudong district, private schools can get 1900 (more than USD 250) per year for absorbing one migrant child. In addition, Shanghai has begun to transform qualified migrant schools into private schools. To become a private school, a migrant school must meet the criteria on teachers' qualifications, educational quality and adequacy of school facilities.

16. (U) As for migrant children enrolled in public schools, these children have the same rights as local children and do not need to pay tuition and book fees. Ling noted that some public schools do not have the capacity to accept large numbers of migrant children. These schools require that migrant children provide a long list of documents, including birth certificates, residence certificates, proof of their parents' employment, etc. For many migrant children it is difficult to obtain all of these documents. For these reasons, many migrant children continue to attend migrant schools, which charge 500 to 900 RMB

(USD 70-125) per semester.

The Pu Guang Migrant School

¶17. (U) On March 5, Congenoffs visited the Pu Guang Migrant School located on the outskirts of Shanghai. The Pu Guang Migrant School is typical of many migrant schools in Shanghai. It is located in a run-down three-story building, hidden among country cottages. The school's principal, Mr. Zhou, provided a tour of the facilities. The school provides both elementary and junior high school education to approximately 700 students. There are only 20 teachers at the school and 10 administrative staff members, most of whom are themselves migrants. Students come from different parts of China and live near the school with their parents. Unlike many migrant schools, Pu Guang does not provide school buses and most students ride bicycles to school.

¶18. (U) The school was established in 1998 and has moved its campus several times. The current school building was built in ¶2005. With some financial support from the Pudong Development Bureau, the school was able to renovate its cafeteria, clinic, and campus in 2007. Zhou said that the school is very interested in transforming itself into a private school and is taking measures to meet the SEC's standards for private schools. Four migrant schools in Pudong have already successfully met the SEC's standards and transformed themselves into private schools. The current tuition in Pu Guang is about 600 RMB (USD 85) per semester.

¶19. (SBU) Mr. Zhou readily admitted that his school's facilities are inadequate. For example, the school tried to set up a computer lab, but all of the computers they received as donations were broken. Friends of the school are trying to fix the computers. Mr. Zhou hopes that the school will meet the SEC's standards and receive subsidies. Until then, it relies mainly on tuition fees and occasional grants from the Pudong Society Development Bureau.

Comment: A Long-Term Challenge

¶10. (SBU) Although Shanghai has one of the best educational systems in China, the city still struggles with trying to provide the same level of education for both migrant and local children. In addition to improving education for migrant children, the SEC is also under pressure to improve education for local children and to increase the quality of education in suburban areas. These pressures will continue and are likely to be of higher priority to the SEC. It is also likely that migrant families will continue to flock to Shanghai searching for jobs, increasing the number of migrant children in need of education. All of these factors indicate that the SEC will

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likely be struggling with finding a way to improve the quality of education for migrant children for some years to come.
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